

# Dynamics of Economic Well-Being: Program Participation, Who Gets Assistance?

*Household Economic Studies*

1993 to  
1994

Issued August 1999

P70-69

## Introduction

Prior to the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, also known as the welfare reform bill, states modified their welfare programs under waivers granted by the Federal Government. These waivers allowed states to experiment with different welfare policies. For example, many states adopted time limits and job training programs to reduce welfare dependence and to encourage work. Changes in the welfare system, both under waivers and the welfare reform bill, have intensified the interest in information on the characteristics of people who participate in welfare programs.

This report examines the participation in major means-tested government programs in the years just before federal welfare reform.<sup>1</sup> For the pre-reform era, the report provides a set of baseline estimates of participation for these programs:

- Aid to families with dependent children (AFDC)
- General assistance (GA)
- Food stamps
- Supplemental security income (SSI)
- Medicaid
- Housing assistance

The data in this report come from the 1993 panel of the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), which covers the period

<sup>1</sup> Means-tested programs are those that require income and/or assets of the individual or family to be below specified thresholds in order to qualify for benefits. These programs provide cash and noncash assistance to eligible individuals and families.

from October 1992 to December 1995.<sup>2</sup> SIPP is a longitudinal survey that follows the same individuals over time.<sup>3</sup> The longitudinal nature of SIPP enables a dynamic analysis of the rates of program participation and of the amounts of benefits received among people of different demographic and socioeconomic characteristics.

Specifically, this report examines the similarities and differences among various groups in:

- Average monthly program participation in 1993 and 1994 (defined as the average number of people who participated in at least one major means-tested program per month in 1993 and 1994);
- The percentage of people who participated in at least one of these programs during 1994;
- The percentage who participated in at least one program in all 24 months of 1993 and 1994; and
- The length of time participants stayed in the program (the duration of the spell) during 1993 and 1994.

<sup>2</sup> For each person on the 1993 nine-wave longitudinal file, data are available for up to 36 continuous reference months; the exact number of months depends upon when the person entered or exited the sample. The time period of calendar months covered by these reference months depends on the person's rotation group. Data for all four rotation groups (the full sample) are available only for the calendar months of January 1993 through September 1995. The Census Bureau will continue to follow the families who participated in the 1992 and 1993 SIPP panels in the Survey of Program Dynamics to provide post-reform longitudinal data.

<sup>3</sup> Efforts were made during the life of the panel to follow people who moved to ensure that the sample remained representative of the noninstitutional population of the United States.

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## Highlights

- About 40 million people participated in major means-tested assistance programs in an average month during both 1993 and 1994.<sup>4</sup>

- Individuals were more likely to participate in medicaid than any of the other programs examined. Eleven percent of individuals participated in an average month in 1994.

- The poor were much more likely to receive at least one type of major means-tested benefit than individuals who were not in poor families. Three in four poor received benefits in at least 1 month in 1994 versus only 1 in 10 of the nonpoor.

- Differences in the participation rates among various demographic groups can, in part, be explained by differences in poverty rates.

- Children (those less than 18 years of age) were more likely than people in other age groups to be long-term recipients (defined here as participating in all months of 1993 and 1994).

- Individuals in households maintained by women were approximately five times as likely to participate in means-tested programs than individuals in married-couple households (45 percent versus 9 percent).

- Adults (those age 18 and over) without a high school degree were more than twice as likely as high school graduates and five times as likely as those with some college to participate in means-tested programs. The participation rates were 26 percent, 11 percent, and 5 percent, respectively.

<sup>4</sup>The estimate for 1993 is 39 (+/-1.3) million and for 1994 is 40 (+/-1.3) million. These estimates are not statistically different.

- Unemployed people were much more likely to receive means-tested benefits in an average month of 1994 than were people with full-time jobs (27 percent as compared to 4 percent).

## Program Participation: 1993 to 1994

Of the estimated 261 million civilians living in the United States, approximately 40 million or 15.2 percent participated in one or more major means-tested assistance programs, on average, during each month of 1994. As can be seen in Figure 1, the average monthly participation rate has increased noticeably from about 11 percent in the 1987-1990 period to 15.2 percent in 1993 and 1994.<sup>5</sup>

Only a small proportion of the population, however, participated on a long-term basis, with about 10 percent of the population having participated in each month of the 1993-1994 period. About 16.5

<sup>5</sup> SIPP average program participation rates from 1987 to 1992 were obtained from previous Census Bureau reports, specifically, Current Population Reports, Household Economic Studies, Series P70-31, P70-41, P70-46, and P70-58. The program participation rate for 1989 is not available. There is no statistical difference between the average monthly participation rates for 1987 and 1990.

percent of those under 18 years old participated each month of the 1993-1994 period, a figure that is statistically higher than the comparable proportion of 18 to 64 year old recipients, 6.9 percent, and higher than that of elderly recipients, 10.3 percent.<sup>6</sup>

## Medicaid Has the Highest Participation Rate

As shown in Table A and Figure 2, individuals were more likely to participate in medicaid than in any of the other programs examined here. In 1994, the average monthly participation rate for medicaid was 11.3 percent, higher than that for AFDC, GA, food stamps, housing assistance, or SSI. A larger proportion of the population, about 6.6 percent, participated in all 24 months in medicaid than in any other program.<sup>7</sup>

An estimated 29 million people received medicaid benefits in 1994; almost 16 million of those recipients

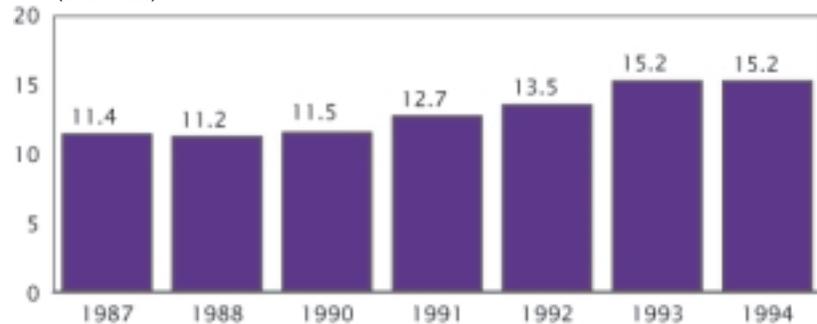
<sup>6</sup> There is no statistical difference between the proportion of people 18 to 64 years old and the proportion of the elderly participating.

<sup>7</sup> There is no statistical difference between the average monthly participation rate for AFDC and housing assistance.

Figure 1.

### Average Monthly Participation Rate in Means-Tested Programs: Selected Years, 1987 to 1994

(Percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, Household Economic Studies, Dynamics of Economic Well-Being: Program Participation, 1993-1994, *Who Gets Assistance?*, P70-69.

were children.<sup>8</sup> In fact, 22.1 percent of children under age 18 received medicaid, compared with 7.1 percent of people 18 to 64 years old, and 8.0 percent of people over 65 years old.

### Over Half of the Poor Receive Means-Tested Assistance

Figure 3 shows that 60.3 percent of the poor, those with family incomes under the poverty thresholds, received at least one type of major means-tested benefit in 1994, compared with 7.0 percent of the nonpoor.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, 75.1 percent of the poor received benefits during at least 1 month of 1994, compared with 10.5 percent of the nonpoor. The poor also tended to be long-term participants in means-tested programs: 57.9 percent of the poor, but only 3.4 percent of the nonpoor, participated in all 24 months of 1993-1994.

### Program Participation Varies by Demographic Group

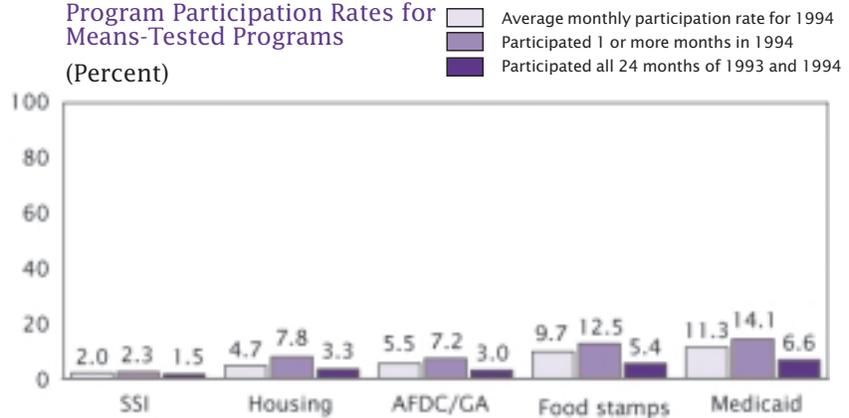
The likelihood of receiving means-tested assistance varied among race and ethnic groups. In 1994, the average number of Whites receiving assistance per month, 26 million, was far greater than the number of Blacks, 12 million. However, the average monthly participation rate was higher for Blacks (36.0 percent) than for Whites (11.8 percent), as shown in Figure 4. In addition, Blacks were more likely than Whites to participate in each month of the period 1993-1994: 27.0 percent of Blacks, compared with 6.9 percent of Whites.

<sup>8</sup> There is no statistical difference between the percentage of people 18 to 64 years old who received medicaid and the percentage of the elderly who received medicaid.

<sup>9</sup> The poverty threshold for a family of three with one related child was \$11,929 in 1994. Data on poverty thresholds by family size and number of related children under 18 years for 1994 can be obtained from the Current Population Reports, Consumer Income, P60-189.

Figure 2.

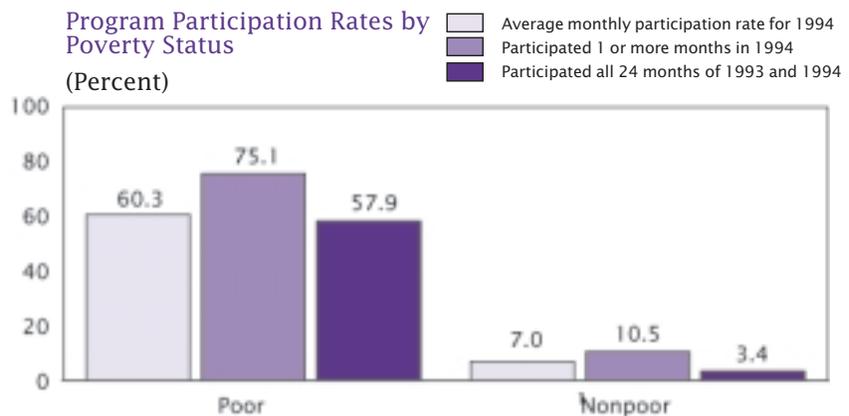
### Program Participation Rates for Means-Tested Programs



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, Household Economic Studies, Dynamics of Economic Well-Being: Program Participation, 1993-1994, *Who Gets Assistance?*, P70-69.

Figure 3.

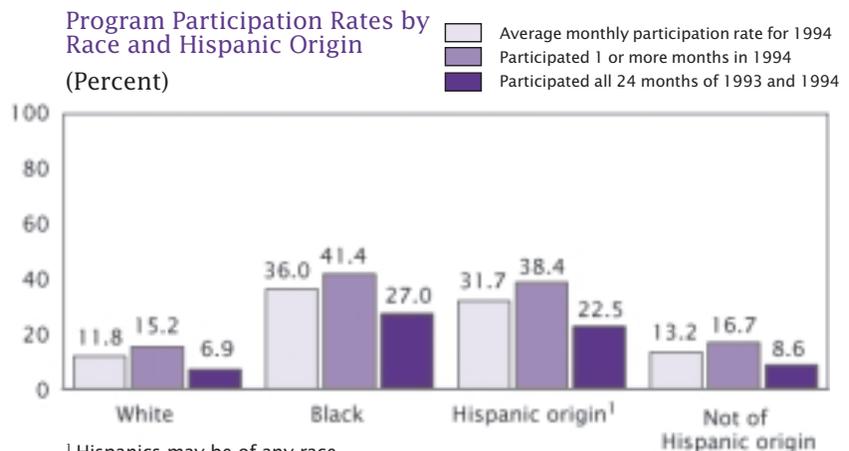
### Program Participation Rates by Poverty Status



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, Household Economic Studies, Dynamics of Economic Well-Being: Program Participation, 1993-1994, *Who Gets Assistance?*, P70-69.

Figure 4.

### Program Participation Rates by Race and Hispanic Origin



<sup>1</sup> Hispanics may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, Household Economic Studies, Dynamics of Economic Well-Being: Program Participation, 1993-1994, *Who Gets Assistance?*, P70-69.

Table A.  
Average Monthly Participation Rates and Median Family Benefits by Selected Characteristics: 1993 and 1994

Characteristic	Program participation rates (percent)												Monthly family benefits <sup>2</sup> (dollars)			
	Any means-tested program <sup>1</sup>		AFDC/GA		SSI		Food stamps		Medicaid		Housing assistance		1993		1994	
	1993	1994	1993	1994	1993	1994	1993	1994	1993	1994	1993	1994	Median	Standard error	Median	Standard error
Total number of recipients <sup>3</sup> . . . . .	39,162	39,514	14,675	14,438	4,841	5,106	25,713	25,383	27,984	29,332	13,044	12,206	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)
As percent of the population . . . . .	15.2	15.2	5.7	5.5	1.9	2.0	10.0	9.7	10.9	11.3	5.1	4.7	485	4.0	476	3.0
<b>Race and Hispanic Origin<sup>4</sup></b>																
White . . . . .	11.7	11.8	3.8	3.7	1.4	1.5	7.4	7.2	8.1	8.5	3.5	3.3	444	4.5	435	3.5
Not of Hispanic origin . . . . .	9.4	9.4	2.8	2.6	1.3	1.3	5.7	5.4	6.4	6.8	2.8	2.6	400	6.0	399	5.0
Black . . . . .	36.6	36.0	16.4	16.4	4.5	4.7	26.0	25.6	26.8	27.5	14.9	13.2	560	4.0	542	9.0
Hispanic origin . . . . .	32.3	31.7	13.7	12.9	3.0	2.9	22.9	21.9	23.4	23.0	10.9	10.0	557	18.0	556	12.5
Not of Hispanic origin . . . . .	13.3	13.2	4.8	4.7	1.8	1.8	8.5	8.3	9.4	9.9	4.4	4.1	466	4.5	460	3.0
<b>Age</b>																
Under 18 years . . . . .	26.2	26.5	13.2	12.9	0.0	0.0	19.6	19.3	21.2	22.1	8.0	7.4	604	4.5	587	6.0
18 to 64 years . . . . .	11.0	10.8	3.4	3.3	2.0	2.1	6.9	6.6	6.8	7.1	3.8	3.4	444	2.0	443	3.0
65 years and over . . . . .	12.0	11.7	0.2	0.2	5.5	5.4	4.2	4.1	8.1	8.0	5.2	5.2	204	3.5	200	5.0
<b>Sex</b>																
Male . . . . .	13.0	13.0	4.5	4.3	1.4	1.4	8.4	8.2	8.8	9.2	4.4	3.9	490	7.5	479	5
Female . . . . .	17.2	17.3	6.8	6.7	2.4	2.5	11.5	11.2	12.8	13.2	5.7	5.4	483	5	473	5.5
<b>Educational Attainment (people 18 years old and over)</b>																
Less than 4 years of high school . . . . .	25.8	25.6	6.5	5.9	7.5	7.7	15.3	14.8	17.5	17.8	9.0	8.4	432	7	433	5.5
High school graduate, no college . . . . .	10.5	10.5	2.9	3.0	1.9	2.0	6.2	6.1	6.4	6.7	3.6	3.5	396	10	386	10.5
1 or more years of college . . . . .	4.6	4.5	1.2	1.2	0.8	0.9	2.4	2.3	2.7	2.8	1.9	1.7	420	13	433	11
<b>Disability Status (people 15 to 64 years old)</b>																
With a work disability . . . . .	25.0	25.5	6.4	6.3	9.3	10.0	15.1	14.6	18.9	20.0	6.6	6.5	459	5	454	7
With no work disability . . . . .	8.7	8.5	3.2	3.1	0.3	0.4	5.7	5.6	4.8	5.0	3.4	3.0	466	9.5	448	7
<b>Residence</b>																
Metropolitan . . . . .	14.7	14.7	5.9	5.9	1.7	1.9	9.5	9.4	10.6	11.1	5.3	4.9	517	5.5	521	6
Central city . . . . .	23.0	22.4	10.4	9.9	2.7	2.7	15.8	15.2	17.0	17.0	9.1	8.3	574	7.5	564	5.5
Noncentral city . . . . .	9.3	9.5	3.1	3.2	1.1	1.3	5.5	5.5	6.5	7.0	2.9	2.6	444	5	447	8
Nonmetropolitan . . . . .	17.0	16.6	4.8	4.4	2.4	2.3	11.5	10.7	11.6	11.9	4.2	3.9	401	9.5	354	7
<b>Region</b>																
Northeast . . . . .	14.8	14.6	6.4	6.0	1.9	1.9	8.9	8.6	10.9	10.9	5.9	5.6	599	11	610	13
Midwest . . . . .	12.5	12.6	5.4	5.3	1.2	1.3	8.7	8.5	9.1	9.5	4.6	4.4	538	9.5	486	5
South . . . . .	16.5	16.4	4.5	4.3	2.4	2.5	11.5	11.4	10.5	11.1	5.0	4.2	377	2	368	5.5
West . . . . .	16.7	16.8	7.3	7.4	2.0	2.0	10.0	9.6	13.4	13.9	4.9	4.9	630	7	624	7.5
<b>Family Status</b>																
In families . . . . .	15.6	15.6	6.5	6.4	1.4	1.5	10.8	10.6	11.4	11.8	4.8	4.4	531	6	512	6.5
In married-couple families . . . . .	9.1	8.9	2.2	2.2	0.9	0.9	5.5	5.2	5.8	6.1	2.5	2.0	377	2	380	4.5
In families with a female householder, no spouse present . . . . .	44.3	44.3	26.3	24.9	3.4	3.4	34.9	33.8	36.1	36.3	15.4	15.0	614	4	599	3
Unrelated individuals . . . . .	12.8	12.4	0.7	0.6	4.5	4.7	5.2	4.9	7.7	7.9	6.3	6.1	169	13.5	188	12.5
<b>Employment and Labor Force Status (people 18 years old and over)</b>																
Employed full time . . . . .	4.0	3.8	0.4	0.5	0.2	0.3	1.8	1.7	1.2	1.4	1.8	1.6	235	6.5	239	10
Employed part time . . . . .	8.6	9.2	1.8	2.0	0.9	1.1	4.9	5.4	4.6	5.4	3.1	3.0	297	6.5	299	6
Unemployed . . . . .	26.6	26.9	10.4	11.3	1.9	1.5	19.9	20.2	16.0	17.0	9.1	9.0	455	6.5	446	10.5
Not in labor force . . . . .	21.3	21.3	6.3	6.0	6.9	7.1	12.6	12.3	15.9	16.1	7.1	6.7	460	3.5	458	3.5

Table A.  
Average Monthly Participation Rates and Median Family Benefits by Selected Characteristics: 1993 and 1994—Con.

Characteristic	Program participation rates (percent)												Monthly family benefits <sup>2</sup> (dollars)				
	Any means-tested program <sup>1</sup>		AFDC/GA		SSI		Food stamps		Medicaid		Housing assistance		1993		1994		
	1993	1994	1993	1994	1993	1994	1993	1994	1993	1994	1993	1994	Median	Stand-ard error	Median	Stand-ard error	
Marital Status (people 18 years old and over)																	
Married	6.6	6.2	1.4	1.3	1.0	1.1	3.9	3.7	3.5	3.5	2.1	1.7	604	7.5	587	9	
Separated, divorced, or widowed	19.6	19.6	5.0	4.8	5.9	6.1	11.2	11.1	13.6	13.9	7.4	7.3	358	10.5	359	8.5	
Never married	15.6	15.6	5.1	4.9	3.6	3.8	8.9	8.6	10.5	11.0	6.0	5.6	363	11.5	371	9.5	
<b>Family Income-to-Poverty Ratio</b>																	
Under 1.00	60.5	60.3	29.7	28.3	6.2	6.7	49.6	48.3	47.0	47.7	20.8	20.0	558	6.5	541	6.5	
1.00 and over	6.7	7.0	1.2	1.4	1.1	1.1	2.6	2.8	4.1	4.6	2.1	1.9	349	11.5	364	8	

X Not applicable.

<sup>1</sup>Means-tested programs include AFDC, general assistance, SSI, food stamps, medicaid, and housing assistance.

<sup>2</sup>Median monthly family benefits include AFDC, general assistance, SSI, and food stamps only.

<sup>3</sup>In thousands.

<sup>4</sup>Hispanics may be of any race.

There was also a strong association between Hispanic origin<sup>10</sup> and the likelihood of receiving means-tested assistance. In fact, nearly 9 million people of Hispanic origin received means-tested assistance in 1994, compared with almost 31 million people not of Hispanic origin. However, during the same year, the average monthly participation rate for people of Hispanic origin was 31.7 percent, compared with 13.2 percent for those not of Hispanic origin. Hispanics were also more likely to receive means-tested assistance in each month of the 1993-1994 period: 22.5 percent of Hispanics, compared with 8.6 percent for those not of Hispanic origin. Since poverty and participation in major means-tested assistance programs are closely related (see Figure 3), the differences among the racial and Hispanic-origin groups in participation rates can, in part, be explained by the differences in poverty rates. In 1994, the average monthly poverty rate was 12.7

percent for Whites and 31.2 percent for Blacks.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, Hispanics had an average monthly poverty rate of 31.4 percent, compared with 13.5 percent for non-Hispanics (see Figure 5).<sup>12</sup>

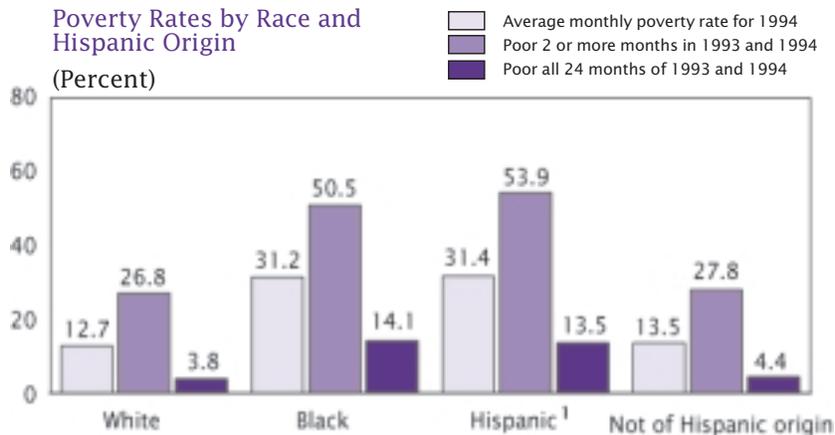
<sup>11</sup> The information on poverty rates using SIPP can be found in Current Population Reports, Household Economics Studies, Series P70-63.

<sup>12</sup> There is no statistical difference between the average monthly participation rate and the average monthly poverty rate for Hispanics. There is no statistical difference between the average monthly participation rate and the average monthly poverty rate for non-Hispanics. There is no statistical difference between the average monthly poverty rate for Blacks and Hispanics.

### Children Under 18 Years Old Are More Likely to Receive Means-Tested Assistance Than People in Other Age Groups

Children under 18 years of age were more than twice as likely as people 18 to 64 years old to receive means-tested benefits, according to Figure 6. In an average month during 1994, 19 million (26.5 percent) children received some type of means-tested benefit, compared with 17 million (10.8 percent) people age 18 to 64 years old and 4 million (11.7 percent)

Figure 5.  
Poverty Rates by Race and Hispanic Origin (Percent)



<sup>1</sup> Hispanics may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, Household Economic Studies, Dynamics of Economic Well-Being: Program Participation, 1993-1994, *Who Gets Assistance?*, P70-69.

<sup>10</sup> Hispanics may be of any race. The information on the Hispanic population shown in this report was collected in the 50 states and the District of Columbia, and therefore, does not include residents of Puerto Rico.

people 65 years and older.<sup>13</sup> Children also tended to be long-term participants, with 11 million (16.5 percent) collecting benefits in all 24 months of the period 1993-1994, compared with 11 million (6.9 percent) and 3 million (10.3 percent) for people ages 18 to 64 years old and 65 years and older, respectively.

### Families Maintained by Women Have Higher Participation Rates

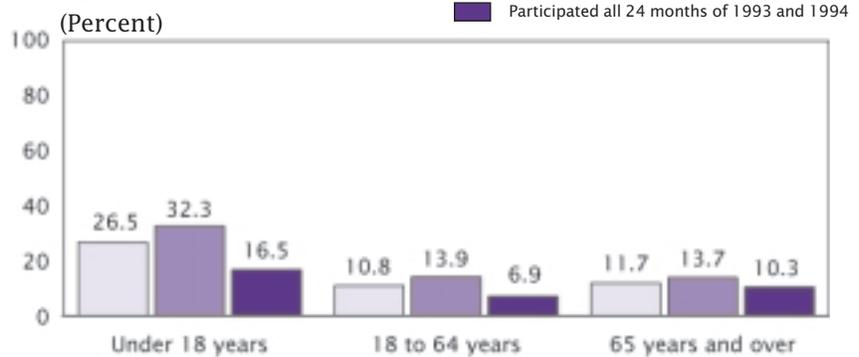
Reflecting their higher poverty rates and lower incomes, individuals in families maintained by women were much more likely to participate in major means-tested programs, in an average month of 1994, than were those in married-couple families—44.3 percent compared with 8.9 percent.<sup>14</sup> During 1994, households maintained by women had an average monthly poverty rate of 39.8 percent and an annual median income of \$19,872, compared with an average monthly poverty rate of 8.4 percent and an annual median income of \$45,041 for married-couple families. Similarly, approximately half (50.1 percent) of individuals in families maintained by women participated in means-tested programs during at least 1 month of 1994, while 12.3 percent of individuals in married-couple families participated in at least 1 month during that period. Moreover, individuals in families maintained by women were more than five times as likely as individuals in married-couple families to receive benefits in all 24 months of the period 1993-1994—32.2 percent compared with 5.2 percent.

<sup>13</sup> There is no statistical difference between the percentage of people age 18 to 64 and the percentage of people 65 years and older who received means-tested benefits.

<sup>14</sup> There is no statistical difference between the average monthly participation rate and poverty rate for married-couple families.

Figure 6.

### Program Participation Rates by Age of Individual



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, Household Economic Studies, Dynamics of Economic Well-Being: Program Participation, 1993-1994, *Who Gets Assistance?*, P70-69.

Figure 7.

### Program Participation Rates by Sex



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, Household Economic Studies, Dynamics of Economic Well-Being: Program Participation, 1993-1994, *Who Gets Assistance?*, P70-69.

Women were more likely than men to receive means-tested benefits. In 1994, 23 million (17.3 percent) women participated in an average month, compared with nearly 17 million (13.0 percent) men. Women were also more likely than men to receive means-tested benefits in each month of the 1993-1994 period, 11.6 percent compared with 8.2 percent. (See Figure 7.)

### Recipients Have Lower Educational Levels

For people age 18 and over, lower educational attainment was associated with greater program participation (see Table A and Figure 8). In 1994, about 1 in 4 (25.6 percent) of those with less than 4 years of high

school received means-tested benefits, compared with 1 in 10 (10.5 percent) for high school graduates and about 1 in 25 (4.5 percent) for those with at least 1 year of college. Individuals who did not graduate from high school also remained on means-tested programs longer than high school graduates. The median duration of receipt for those without a high school diploma was 11.0 months, compared with 7.2 months for high school graduates, and 7.1 months for those with at least 1 year of college (see Table B).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> There is no statistical difference between the median spell duration of high school graduates and the median spell duration of people with some college.

## The Unemployed and Those Out of the Labor Force Are More Likely to Receive Means-Tested Benefits Than the Employed

Unemployed people were much more likely to receive means-tested benefits in an average month of 1994 than were people with full-time jobs. For people 18 years and older, nearly 27 percent of the unemployed received means-tested benefits in an average month of 1994, compared with 21.3 percent of those out of the labor force, 3.8 percent of those employed with full-time jobs, and 9.2 percent of those employed with part-time jobs (see Figure 9).

The unemployed may receive unemployment compensation in addition to major means-tested benefits. In an average month of 1994, only 19.3 percent of the unemployed received unemployment compensation, while 11.3 percent received AFDC or GA, 17.0 percent received medicaid, 1.5 percent received SSI, and 20.2 percent received food stamps.<sup>16</sup>

## Accuracy and Reliability of the Data

Statistics from sample surveys are subject to sampling and nonsampling error. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and meet the Census Bureau's standards for statistical significance. Nonsampling errors in surveys may be attributed to a variety of sources, such as how the survey was designed, how respondents interpret questions, how able and willing respondents are to provide correct answers, and how accurately answers are coded and classified. The Census Bureau employs quality control procedures throughout the production process—including the overall design of surveys, testing the wording of questions, reviewing the work of interviewers and coders,

<sup>16</sup> There is no statistical difference between the percentage of the unemployed who received medicaid and the percentage of unemployed who received food stamps.

and conducting statistical review of reports.

The SIPP employs ratio estimation, whereby sample estimates are adjusted to independent estimates of the national population by age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin. This weighting partially corrects for bias due to undercoverage, but how it affects different variables in the survey is not precisely known. Moreover, biases may also be present when people who are missed in the survey differ from those interviewed in ways other than the categories used in weighting (age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin). All of these considerations affect comparisons across different surveys or data sources.

For further information on statistical standards and the computation and

use of standard errors, contact Mark Gorsak, Demographic Statistical Methods Division, at 301-457-4228 or on the Internet at [Mark.Gorsak@cmail.census.gov](mailto:Mark.Gorsak@cmail.census.gov).

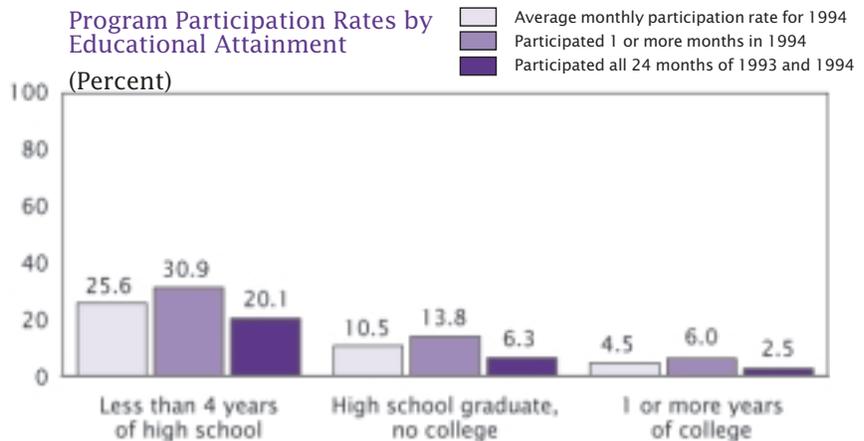
## Comments From Data Users

The Census Bureau welcomes the comments and advice of data users. If you have suggestions or comments, please write to:

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or contact:  
Program Participation Statistics  
301-457-3230

Figure 8.

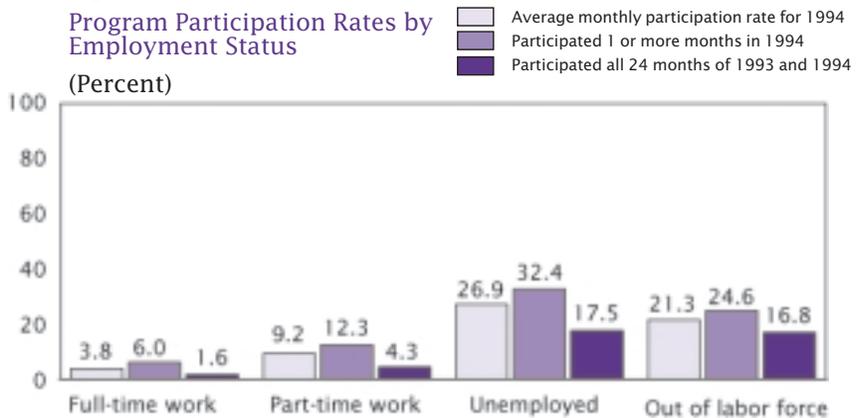
### Program Participation Rates by Educational Attainment



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, Household Economic Studies, Dynamics of Economic Well-Being: Program Participation, 1993-1994, *Who Gets Assistance?*, P70-69.

Figure 9.

### Program Participation Rates by Employment Status



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, Household Economic Studies, Dynamics of Economic Well-Being: Program Participation, 1993-1994, *Who Gets Assistance?*, P70-69.

Table B.  
**Median Duration of Participation and Standard Errors by Program: 1993 and 1994**

(In months. Median duration cannot be computed when more than half of the spells are continuing in the last month of data collection. This situation is especially likely to occur for elderly recipients whose incomes from other sources are unlikely to rise over time)

Characteristic	Any means-tested program <sup>1</sup>		AFDC/GA		SSI		Food stamps		Medicaid		Housing assistance	
	Median	Standard error	Median	Standard error	Median	Standard error	Median	Standard error	Median	Standard error	Median	Standard error
All persons . . . . .	7.4	0.22218	8.3	0.79405	(X)	(X)	8.2	1.00416	8.0	0.18135	16.1	1.31521
<b>Race and Hispanic Origin<sup>2</sup></b>												
White . . . . .	7.3	0.24837	7.6	0.52661	(X)	(X)	7.6	0.40906	7.9	0.21114	11.8	1.0888
Not of Hispanic origin . . . . .	7.2	0.30979	7.2	0.66564	(X)	(X)	7.6	0.5598	8.4	2.01193	11.0	1.06865
Black . . . . .	7.9	0.30321	11.2	0.55659	(X)	(X)	11.2	0.4974	9.0	1.02362	18.0	1.13099
Hispanic origin . . . . .	7.4	0.39864	8.6	1.29495	(X)	(X)	7.6	0.51089	7.5	0.33358	(X)	(X)
Not of Hispanic origin . . . . .	7.4	0.26354	8.1	0.97106	(X)	(X)	8.6	0.1124	8.6	1.2717	14.0	1.84038
<b>Age<sup>3</sup></b>												
Under 18 years . . . . .	7.0	0.29579	9.8	1.55256	(X)	(X)	10.1	1.92349	7.4	0.22398	19.9	2.18595
18 to 64 years . . . . .	7.5	0.30135	7.6	0.47854	(X)	(X)	7.5	0.35678	11.1	0.42482	11.5	0.88704
65 years and over . . . . .	19.5	3.35537	(B)	(B)	(X)	(X)	14.4	3.94844	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)
<b>Sex</b>												
Male . . . . .	7.1	0.27064	7.3	0.55756	(X)	(X)	7.5	0.39061	7.7	0.24285	12.6	21.0952
Female . . . . .	7.8	0.3638	9.8	1.73589	(X)	(X)	9.9	1.24348	8.9	1.40133	18.2	1.47466
<b>Educational Attainment (people 18 years old and over)</b>												
Less than 4 years of high school . . . . .	11.0	0.70525	7.4	0.62194	(X)	(X)	8.7	2.20665	12.7	2.66229	21.5	4.58025
High school graduate, no college . . . . .	7.2	0.4382	8.5	2.1211	(X)	(X)	7.4	0.54764	11.5	1.15493	11.0	2.10206
1 or more years of college . . . . .	7.1	0.60594	6.8	6.2284	12.8	8.17021	7.1	0.77092	8.6	2.9504	9.0	6.27684
<b>Disability Status (people 15 to 64 years old)</b>												
With a work disability . . . . .	11.1	1.31667	7.5	0.69958	(X)	(X)	9.7	2.36988	17.8	7.42448	21.9	4.68369
With no work disability . . . . .	7.0	0.33104	7.5	0.5768	(X)	(X)	7.3	0.39049	7.8	0.34871	8.0	0.79504
<b>Residence</b>												
Metropolitan . . . . .	7.6	0.25709	8.9	1.00242	(X)	(X)	10.0	1.70288	8.2	1.44454	18.6	1.38412
Central city . . . . .	7.7	0.33959	9.2	1.47948	(X)	(X)	11.2	0.6975	9.4	6.25239	19.9	1.79573
Noncentral city . . . . .	7.4	0.38586	8.4	1.57093	(X)	(X)	8.4	1.15938	8.0	0.29192	11.4	1.13945
Nonmetropolitan . . . . .	6.7	1.31011	7.0	4.55103	(X)	(X)	6.8	1.07261	7.8	0.40092	7.8	0.99204
<b>Region</b>												
Northeast . . . . .	7.3	0.44999	8.0	0.54801	25.6	2.28723	10.6	3.71621	7.7	0.34646	(X)	(X)
Midwest . . . . .	6.0	0.98197	8.1	1.64662	(X)	(X)	7.7	0.86382	9.8	1.58659	13.1	3.66224
South . . . . .	7.5	0.42478	7.8	0.8718	(X)	(X)	8.6	1.13991	7.8	0.33785	7.0	1.10906
West . . . . .	7.7	0.3904	11.5	1.75971	(X)	(X)	7.7	0.58606	8.8	3.4856	(X)	(X)
<b>Family Status</b>												
In families . . . . .	7.3	0.22602	8.6	0.81977	(X)	(X)	8.0	1.03657	7.8	0.18941	16.3	1.23242
In married-couple families . . . . .	6.0	0.2385	9.0	0.82206	(X)	(X)	7.2	1.37234	7.5	0.23022	7.5	1.26258
In families with a female householder, no spouse present . . . . .	9.8	1.871	11.0	0.59151	(X)	(X)	11.7	0.71355	10.5	1.70927	(X)	(X)
Unrelated individuals . . . . .	10.5	1.95171	4.0	0.95566	(X)	(X)	9.9	3.12797	20.5	5.90563	14.3	2.38853
<b>Employment and Labor Force Status (people 18 years old and over)</b>												
Employed full time . . . . .	4.3	0.99373	3.9	0.18634	3.9	0.24163	4.8	0.92289	7.2	0.42438	5.2	2.03562
Employed part time . . . . .	9.1	2.39752	7.1	4.37907	(X)	(X)	6.2	2.27387	11.9	0.62936	11.5	1.34208
Unemployed . . . . .	7.4	0.6129	8.1	1.11922	(X)	(X)	7.5	0.66937	8.7	1.30151	13.9	2.53526
Not in labor force . . . . .	11.8	0.74419	10.4	20.8445	(X)	(X)	11.1	0.72093	15.2	1.06796	(X)	(X)
<b>Family Income-to-Poverty Ratio</b>												
Under 1.00 . . . . .	10.1	1.08174	9.1	1.26663	(X)	(X)	10.5	1.02283	11.4	0.3862	(X)	(X)
1.00 and over . . . . .	9.6	0.90115	7.4	0.51679	(X)	(X)	6.8	0.74421	7.2	0.2262	7.1	0.93348

B Base less than 200,000. X Not applicable.

<sup>1</sup>Means-tested programs include AFDC, general assistance, SSI, food stamps, medicaid, and housing assistance.

<sup>2</sup>Hispanics may be of any race.

<sup>3</sup>Age, educational attainment, and other variables are measured at the time the spells begin, excluding people already on programs at the start of the survey.